

PRSS ROOM



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**The Honorable John W. Snow
Prepared Remarks: Iowa State Fair
Presentation of the new "Keelboat Nickel"**

Thank you so much for having me here today – I'm delighted to be able to visit the famous Iowa State Fair!

And it's terrific to be with my friend Senator Grassley; I can't think of a better person to tour these fairgrounds with. We're both excited to be here to talk about the new series of nickels from the U.S. Mint.

The release of new coinage and currency is a great part of my job. I'm humbled to have my signature on our paper currency and impressed to see our technological advances against counterfeiting. I'm also very interested in the rich history of our coins. As Treasury Secretary, I get a lot of interesting questions about money – like, why is it green or why is the nickel bigger than the dime?

Since we're here to talk about the nickel, I'll answer that one for you.

Back in 1793, when the first U.S. coins were produced, the U.S. Mint linked the sizes of coins to a particular metal standard--the silver dollar.

Except for the copper penny, all coins were produced in proportionate metallic content to the dollar, and their sizes were regulated accordingly. The fifty-cent coin contained one-half as much silver as the dollar, the quarter had one-fourth as much, and the dime or ten-cent coin had one-tenth as much.

The five-cent coin, or half-dime as it was called then, had only one-twentieth the silver. But it was so small that it was difficult for people to handle. So in 1866, Mint officials decided to make it larger by changing its content from silver and copper to a combination of copper and **nickel**--and the modern nickel was born.

President Thomas Jefferson's profile has graced the nickel since 1938. It is therefore appropriate that we should use this coin to commemorate an historic journey of discovery and exploration that began at his behest: the Lewis and Clark expedition.

As Senator Grassley mentioned, the hope at the time was to find a waterway that could serve as a passage to the west coast, which would have been an incredible boon for international trade and commerce.

The Keelboat shown on this new nickel was the incredibly versatile vehicle used by the expedition to carry them and their supplies through the rivers of the Louisiana Territory in search of that passage.

Although no great northwest passage was to be found, the expedition of Lewis and Clark was of immeasurable value to our growing country.

Thomas Jefferson, a man who personified the phrase "ahead of his time," knew that a waterway would be an unprecedented advance for U.S. and global commerce. But he also understood that exploring the west, and mapping it, would be of great value for a multitude of reasons. He instructed Lewis to collect information that would add to the nation's strategic and military knowledge and that would help assess the economic value of the new territory.

Jefferson anticipated the need for the country to expand; he saw the need for more land... especially for agriculture.

How right he was... and so I think it is appropriate that we are unveiling this new coin in Iowa on the same weekend that we celebrate Iowa's agricultural economy at the State Fair.

There's a lot of pride in being a farmer, and plenty of hardship as well. Agriculture is a critical part of our economic fabric. It remains a great source of strength for our country. And American farmers literally feed the world.

Agriculture feels the pain when our country takes a blow, like it did after September 11th, the bursting of the stock market bubble and the corporate scandals. And you also have a business partner that many don't have to worry about as much: Mother Nature. And she can be the best business partner in Iowa, or she can be your worst nightmare.

My top priority as Treasury Secretary, and George W. Bush's top domestic priority as your President, is to keep the tax burden as low on individuals, farmers and business owners as we can. Because you are the folks who make this great American economy run, and you don't need Uncle Sam slowing you down.

Thanks in large part to the President's leadership on tax cuts, our economy is doing much better. GDP growth has been strong and good jobs are being created all over America. Although the President would like to see even stronger job growth, the good news is that jobs have been added to the national payrolls for 11 months in a row.

The President and I want all job-seekers to be rewarded with paychecks, and we know that the reward cannot come soon enough for workers and their families looking for work. While lots of new jobs have been created in the last year, we're not satisfied. More needs to be done.

The underlying fundamentals of our economy are very strong. We've seen that tax cuts work and that job creation does follow economic growth. I'm optimistic. I'm confident we are on the right course.

One of the reasons for my optimism comes from the people I meet on the road, all over this great country. Everywhere I travel, I meet with small-business owners, the people who drive our economy. And everywhere I go, they tell me that they are using their tax savings to grow their business and hire new employees; they know that the president's tax cuts have made all the difference in the world to them, putting oxygen into their businesses.

I recently visited a chocolate factory in New Hampshire where, because of the President's tax policy, they've been hiring *and* have opened a new facility. I also spent time with a small manufacturer in Alaska who, thanks to the President's tax cuts for small business, was finally able to buy an expensive new piece of equipment to increase his company's productivity.

Wherever I go, I find that the news is good among this critical segment of our economy – and what's good for small business is good for growth, jobs and greater prosperity for all Americans.

Small business creates two-thirds of new private sector jobs in America. It employs more than half of all workers, and accounts for more than half of the output of our economy. Good news for small business is good news for Americans who are seeking work.

You'll often hear the President say that: what's good for small business is good for America. That's why his tax cuts were designed to help small businesses – a lot of whom are farmers.

Because when small business is growing, the American economy is growing.

And it is important to remember that the benefit, the stimulating effect, of those tax

cuts is ongoing.

More than 280,000 million business taxpayers in Iowa will be able to use tax savings this year to invest in new equipment, hire additional workers or increase employee compensation.

And more than 1 million individual taxpayers in Iowa will have lower income tax bills for 2004 thanks to the President's tax relief.

When individuals and small-business owners are able to keep more of their own money to spend or invest they way they see fit, good economic news follows.

We still have challenges, to be sure. The price of oil is causing an economic headwind, and it's critical that the Congress act to pass the President's energy plan which has been stalled in the Senate. The Senate needs to act, and act now.

We need to enact his energy policy because it will make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy and help to keep and create energy industry jobs here in America. We've also got to conserve better, we've got to work on renewable energy sources like ethanol, and we've got to explore in environmentally friendly ways to increase U.S. energy output in places like ANWR in Alaska. The President's plan will lead to lower energy costs, and that's very important for our economy.

High health care costs are another challenge for individuals, families and employers. The recently enacted Medicare prescription drug bill contains an innovative new program to empower consumers to make better health care choices. HSAs, Health Savings Accounts, are really super-charged IRAs that put patients back in charge of their health care. You own it, you control it, you can leave it to your heirs.

The President also needs Congress to act and pass Association Health Plans, so small businesses and their employees can band together, across state lines, to purchase health insurance at a much more affordable rate.

More affordable health insurance would be a big help to America's smallest companies... and they are the ones creating most of the new jobs, so their needs are a priority for the President.

I am concerned with the economic impact that baseless, abusive lawsuits have – again, especially on smaller businesses. The threat of lawsuits can be a disincentive for expansion and hiring. And while justice for victims must always remain as the ultimate goal of the system, we can and must make changes that make it harder for wealthy lawyers to make their own financial gain the primary outcome of personal injury suits.

And although we've done great things for our economy with tax cuts, we've still got to convince Congress to make those tax cuts permanent. The President even got them to take the death tax out of the tax code, but a legislative detail is allowing that punishing tax to come back in a few years.

We can't stand for that. The death tax has got to be buried forever. The farmers of Iowa should never have to wonder whether they can pass their land on to their children. Your family business has been taxed enough; you don't need to be taxed again when you die!

Indeed, there is work to be done in many areas to shore up our economy, and to spur increased job creation. But we are already fortunate that our economy is more open, flexible, adaptive and resilient than any other in the world. As long as we continue on the path of freedom, making sure that individuals and entrepreneurs like all of you have an environment in which they can work and grow, our best days will remain ahead of us, all across this great country.

Thank you again for the work you do to keep our economy strong, and thank you for having me here today.